

# The Left Wing Bolts, Splitting the Socialist Party

## Communist Party May Develop From Insurgent Faction

By Louis Kantor

THE birth of a new party is very near. Its unhappy and exceedingly unwilling father is the respectable American Socialist party. This undesired child, at present "crudely" referred to as the Left Wing, will be named, most probably, its fond godparents say, after an uncle in Hungary—the Communist party.

The above is briefly the situation in which the American Socialist party finds itself.

What is it all about, asks the average American citizen. The answer is not easy. One must first be familiar with the philosophy of socialism to comprehend the whole affair, and principally the "tactics" that the Socialist party in America as well as in Europe has employed in its efforts to attain its entire philosophical programme. The present article will first concern itself briefly with the Socialist programme.

Socialism, most of its protagonists will agree, is the advocacy of communal ownership of land and capital. Communal ownership, says one writer, may mean ownership by a democratic state but cannot be held to include ownership by any state that is not democratic. Needless to state, this, of course, is not the only definition of socialism.

"Some Socialists," writes Bertrand Russell, the famous English author, in a recent book, "expect communal ownership to arrive suddenly and completely by a catastrophic revolution, while others expect it to come gradually, first in one industry, then in another. Some insist upon the necessity of completeness in the acquisition of land and capital by the public, while others would be content to see lingering islands of private ownership, provided they were not too extensive or powerful. What all forms have in common is democracy and the abolition, virtual or complete, of the present capitalistic system."

### Both Want Change

Now, that is the present situation generally in the American Socialist movement. The Right Wing believes in general change, the Left Wing insists on immediate change. And by change both factions frankly say they mean the overturning of the present social order.

Socialism as a power began with Karl Marx. Marx was born in 1818 at Treves, in the Rhine Provinces, his father being a legal official, a Jew who had nominally accepted Christianity. Marx led a very active life after he graduated from several German universities, being constantly expelled from various European countries for his revolutionary writings. In 1847 he was asked by the German Communist League to draw up for them a manifesto, which appeared in January, 1848. This is the famous "Communist Manifesto" in which for the first time a coherent system of socialism was set forth.

This "Communist Manifesto" must be explained if the controversy in the Socialist party is to be understood. The most essential of Marx's doctrines may be reduced to three—first, what is called the materialistic interpretation of history; second, the law of the concen-

tration of capital; and, third, the class war.

The first doctrine, according to Marx, is proved by the constant change in society as testified to by a perusal of history. By change he means revolution. The whole movement of history is viewed by him as necessary, as the effect of material causes operating upon human beings. He does not so much advocate the Socialist revolution as predict it. In the second doctrine Marx predicted the concentration of competitive businesses into trusts, which he said would make more glaring the evils of present-day society; and the third doctrine, that as time went on there would be a separation of society into two classes—that of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and that when the proletariat learns how to combine internationally it will take over the control of society and abolish all classes.

### Force Will Win

The manifesto ends with an appeal to the workers of the world to rise on behalf of communism. "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!"

Both factions of the Socialist party agree that the second Internationale has failed. The recognized leader of the Right Wing, Morris Hillquit, in an article recently published in "The New York Call," makes that admission. This is important, because Hillquit is the international secretary of the Socialist party in America.

But what the Lefts and Rights do not agree upon is what the third Internationale is to be. Hillquit says in this article that "the task of organizing the third Internationale is still before us," while the Lefts say that the Internationale must be the one called by Nicholas Lenin at Moscow.

While the Socialist party has had Left movements in the past, none has equalled the present movement in seriousness. The split came about twelve months ago in New York City, when the Socialist delegation of seven in the Board of Aldermen, headed by Algernon Lee, voted in favor of the fourth Liberty Loan.

This act brought about the "break" which had threatened the regular Socialist party for some time, for prior to the entry of the United States into the late war the Socialists in convention at St. Louis passed a series of resolutions in which the Socialists placed themselves on record as opposing war. And although many Socialists of national importance left the Socialist movement because when the war came it would not relinquish its position, the Socialist party stood firm in its decision to oppose the war.

### The Storm Breaks

So that when, on April 9, 1918, the aldermanic delegation voted in favor of the fourth Liberty Loan, the storm broke loose. The seven members were vehemently condemned on all sides and individual members of the Socialist party de-

## Right Wing Leaders



Algernon Lee

manded their recall. A short time later a group of members of Local New York, led by "Jim" Larkin, Eamonn MacAlpine, Louis Fraina and John Reed, drew up a document which they called the "Manifesto and Programme of the Left Wing Socialist Party, Local Greater New York."

Before quoting excerpts from this "manifesto" it may be well to state some essential facts of this bitter conflict. According to the Lefts the Rights, who say they are as Left as the so-called Lefts, have always temporized and played with social reform measures. The Lefts say that the Rights are content to secure their aims solely by political means, and that the Rights, although they use revolutionary terms, do not mean them literally, but use them for effect. In short, the grievance of the Left Wing is that the Right Wing is too slow. "Immediate action" is the slogan of the Lefts.

Now, in this manifesto nothing that is startlingly new is proclaimed. It is the usual Socialist analysis of society. But it contains a programme that is, to say the least, interesting. And in order to comprehend the processes of thought through which the composers of this "manifesto" arrived at their "programme" the excerpts that follow may prove illuminating:

"Prior to August, 1914, the nations of the world lived on a volcano. Violent eruptions from time to time gave warning of the cataclysm to come, but the diplomats and statesmen managed to localize the outbreak, and the masses, slightly aroused, sank back into their accustomed lethargy with doubts and misgivings, and the subterranean fires continued to smoulder."

"Many trusted blindly, some in their statesmen, some in the cohesive power of Christianity, their common religion, and some in the growing strength of the international Socialist movement. Had not the Ger-

man Social Democracy exchanged dramatic telegrams with the French Socialist party, each pledging itself not to fight in case their governments declared war on each other? A general strike of workers led by these determined Socialists would quickly bring the governments to their senses!"

"But revolutionary socialism was not destined to lie inert for long. In Germany, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Ruhle organized the Spartacus group. But their voices were drowned in the roar of the cannon and the shrieks of the dying and maimed."

All this is interesting, but what is far more interesting is the attitude that the Lefts take on treating with "industrial unrest." Concluding their historical discussion, the Lefts finally come down to the local situation. They deny that their difference with the Rights is dissatisfaction with those in control of the Socialist party, but in tactics. What they object to is that the Rights will not present social unrest into a "regular" revolution.

They say "this essential task is being shirked by our party leaders and officials generally."

An attack on the league of nations follows the manifesto, asserting that it is another form of "capitalist imperialism."

"Bourgeois reforms" are objected to because they may divert the workers from their "revolutionary aim." "The capitalist class of America is using organized labor for its imperialistic purposes. We may soon expect the capitalist class, in true Bismarckian fashion, to grant factory laws, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, sick benefits and the whole litter of bourgeois reforms, so that the workers may be kept fit to produce the greatest profits at the greatest speed."

The manifesto derides purely political activity and holds that the



Morris Hillquit

only purpose of the Socialist in "capitalist parliaments" is to obstruct, and to have nothing to do with bills and the like. One might quote more of these "interesting" paragraphs, but that would take many pages, and it may be assumed that by now the reader is well acquainted with the thought processes of the Lefts. One may very well conclude with the programme of the Lefts.

### The Programme

It is the task of a revolutionary Socialist party to direct the struggles of the proletariat and provide a programme for the culminating crisis. Its propaganda must be so directed that when this crisis comes the workers will be prepared to accept a programme of the following character:

(a) The organization of workers' councils; recognition of and propaganda for these mass organizations of the working class as instruments in the immediate struggle, as the form of expression of the class struggle, and as the instruments for the seizure of the power of the state and the basis of the new proletarian state of the organized producers and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

(b) Workmen's control of industry, to be exercised by the industrial organizations (industrial unions or soviets) of the workers and the industrial vote, as against government ownership or state control of industry.

(c) Repudiation of all national debts—with provisions to safeguard small investors.

(d) Expropriation of the banks—a preliminary measure for the complete expropriation of capital.

(e) Expropriation of the railways and the large (trust) organizations of capital—no compensation to be paid, as "buying out" the capitalists would insure a continuance of the exploitation of the workers; provision, however, to be made during the transition period for the protection of small owners of stock.

(f) The socialization of foreign trade.

These are not the "immediate de-

mands" comprised in the social reform plank now in the platform of our party; they are not a compromise with the capitalist state, but imply a revolutionary struggle against that state and against capitalism, the conquest of power by the proletariat through revolutionary mass action. They imply the new soviet state of the organized producers, the dictatorship of the proletariat; they are preliminary revolutionary measures for the expropriation of capital and the introduction of communist socialism.

That is the Left position. But the Left Wing did not stop with the issuance of a manifesto. The leaders of the Left began a systematic campaign to secure control of the party, and they went about it in this fashion.

The Rights accused the Lefts of forming a "permanent organization, organized on branch lines with delegates to central committee, executive committee, and an executive secretary, and that their aim is to organize in the state, and ultimately in the nation"; second, "that their (the Lefts') aim is to capture the Socialist party machinery, and should they fail in that to split the party"; third, "that they have application and membership cards," and, fourth, "that they have a treasurer and treasury."

The Rights further accused the Lefts of ordering their adherents through the central committee to "sit on the left." . . . "In all matters involving Left Wing tactics 'vote as a unit' with the steering committee." . . . "Do not make motions, ask for divisions, roll call and appeals from the chair. The steering committee will attend to that."

The Rights say further that the Left Wing delegates must have nothing to say, but "must surrender their rights to the steering committee. Who appointed them? What party authority have they? No one seems to know. If you are

## Who the Socialist Leaders Are and What They Believe

a Left Wing delegate you and your branch have no rights, but must blindly follow the dictates of the steering committee."

But the Lefts went on with their work and paid little or no attention to the mild attacks of the "reactionary Socialists." And in order to do their work better in this city the Lefts began the publication of a weekly newspaper. Not that this paper was the first Left Wing organ to be published; there were several others in different sections of the country; but it was the first in New York City. The paper was called "The Communist" and was brought out early in April of this year. One of the chief reasons given for its publication was that the party press, or "The Call," would not give the Lefts space. This paper is edited by John Reed. The two principal associate editors are Eamonn MacAlpine and N. I. Hourwich. The business manager is Benjamin Gitlow.

Other organs are "The Liberator," edited by Max Eastman, and "The Revolutionary Age," edited by Louis C. Fraina, responsible for much of the intellectual philosophy of the Lefts.

"The Socialist" has a grievance against the Lefts, and that is the title which they say has been imposed on them. They deny vigorously the title of Right Wing. "The Socialist" draws a picture of Socialist party sections in Europe, and points out that the Right Wings of Europe were those factions which favored the war. It then discusses conditions in the local Socialist party.

In other words, say the miscalled Rights to the apparently miscalled Lefts, "We're the right Left and you're the left Right."

At this point it may be well to state that there are not only these two factions in the Socialist party. There is the so-called Centrist faction. But we are concerned only with the other two, and the position of the Centrists may be best explained by saying that they are "on the fence" and as yet undecided as to what group they will join.

### Lee's Views

The writer went to see Algernon Lee, the leader of the Rights in Hillquit's absence. Mr. Lee is chief of the Socialist delegation in the Board of Aldermen and is a graduate of several American universities. He is also the educational director of the Rand School of Social Science that was raided by the Lusk Committee during the early part of the week.

At first, like the "leaders" of the Left Wing, Lee refused to discuss the entire matter, giving the same answer that the Left leaders did: "We Socialists do not care to make the capitalist press the political arena of our domestic difficulties." He was finally prevailed upon to discuss the situation. He was asked what the position of the Right Wing, or the regular Socialist party, is.

"The Socialist party," he said, "is frankly and avowedly revolutionary in its aims. What I mean by this is that it aims at a thoroughgoing change in the whole structure of society. Our present social order is based upon private ownership by part of the people of the means of wealth production

which are operated by the labor branch have no rights, but must blindly follow the dictates of the steering committee." This system necessarily involves class division and class rule and the exploitation of the working class by the capitalists. The purpose of the Socialist movement is to substitute social ownership and control of all that is necessary to the people's life so that all the people shall be just owners and all shall be comrade workers. This means a far more radical transformation of society than any which has taken place in the past."

"How will this change be effected?" he was asked.

"Socialists," answered Mr. Lee, "do not conceive that such a great change as this can be brought about by the action of a few. We know that it must be accomplished through the conscious and purposeful action of an effective majority of the people in all the principal countries of the world. It is to this end that we carry on our year long work of propaganda and education and have done so through two generations of patient labor, rewarded by the evidence which every year brings forth that our work is not in vain."

"If it depended only upon us the task would be still more difficult. But the Morgans and the Rockefellers, the Roots and the Overmans, the Wilsons and the Clemenceaus are always unconsciously helping to sow the seeds of discontent and to furnish object lessons which help to clinch the lessons which we teach with tongue and pen."

"How does the Right stand on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' question?" Mr. Lee was further questioned.

"I am not quite sure what the phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat' means in the mouths of our Left Wing. As Marx used it, it meant the triumph of an awakened self-conscious working class and in that sense all Socialists expect it and seek to hasten its advent."

During the month of May the national executive committee of the Socialist party met, and the result of its meeting was the suspension of all the Left Wing branches they could possibly reach. The Lefts became sore. Said they: "Here the Rights have been yelling that we are trying to split the party and they come right along and split it themselves." Seven foreign language federations were suspended and the charter of the party in the State of Michigan was revoked.

In this condition the fight between the Lefts and Rights jogged along, the Lefts setting a date for a three-day conference in New York City beginning June 21. The journalistic warfare was kept up until several weeks ago, when the Russian Soviet Government Bureau was raided by agents of the Lusk Committee, headed by Archibald Stevenson, secretary of the Union League Club and associate counsel of the Lusk Committee.

So the Lusk committee may decide the wrangle that the Lefts and the Rights have been having all to themselves, and set the "Lefts" right. But all this aside, the present indications presage the birth of a new party—a Communist party, as it is called in Hungary, and a Bolshevik party, as it is known in Russia.

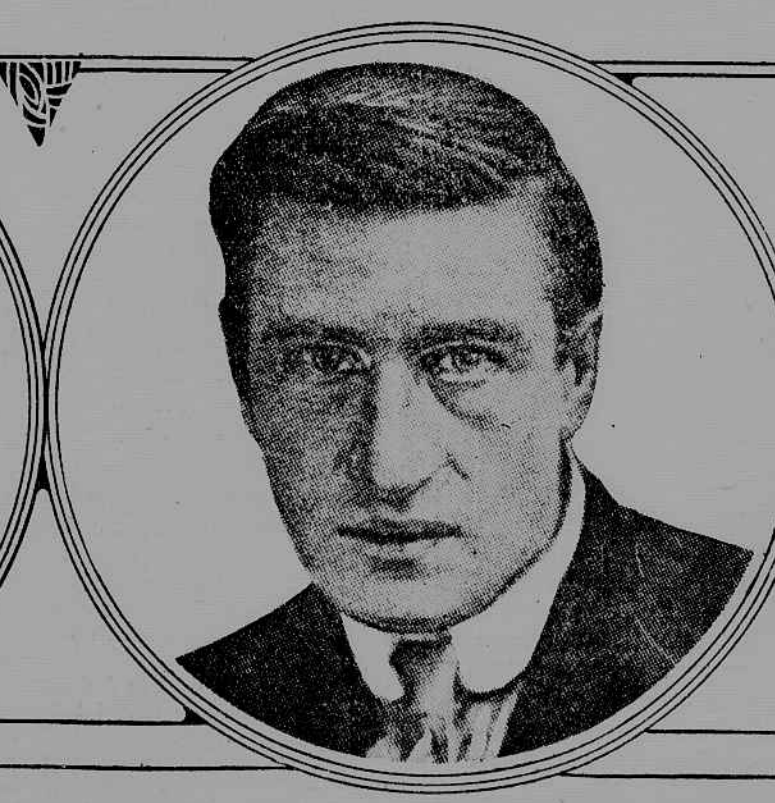
## Four of the Leading Spirits of the Socialist Left Wing Party



Max Eastman



John Reed



"Jim" Larkin



Rose Pastor Stokes